



CANADIAN COAST GUARD AIR CUSHION VEHICLES (HOVERCRAFT)

Southern British Columbia is known for its extremely sheltered waterways, beautiful scenery and normally benevolent weather. The area is also known for its unusual marine hazards, such as large areas of drying mud flats, powerful tidal rapids and whirlpools. These hazards lead to unusual problems for the large inshore fishing fleet and for one of North America's largest recreational boating fleet.

This marine environment means that much of the search and rescue workload is of an unusual nature. For this reason, the Canadian Coast Guard uses an unusual vehicle — the hovercraft — in appropriate areas.

The Canadian Coast Guard operates three SRN6 hovercraft on the west coast. Two are based at Vancouver International Airport on the middle arm of the Fraser River, and the other is based at Parksville on Vancouver Island. Between them, the two bases cover an area bordered by Desolation Sound and Campbell River in the north and the American Gulf Islands in the south. These boundaries are by no means firm and the craft often go beyond them on rescue missions.

Air cushion vehicles, or hovercraft, are different from other marine vehicles in that they travel on a fan-generated cushion of air that reduces surface friction and allows amphibious operations, and high speeds. Propulsion is provided by a variable pitch air propeller and power for all this is supplied by a Rolls-Royce Gnome marine gas turbine engine of 1100 horsepower.

The hovercraft used by the Canadian Coast Guard are SRN6 MK1's that were built by the British Hovercraft Corporation and extensively modified by Coast Guard engineers to meet Canadian Coast Guard search and rescue requirements. The craft are 14.7 metres long, 7 metres wide and weigh about 8500 kg. The craft may operate at full power for up to 10 hours and carry up to 4000 kg payload if necessary. Top speed in good conditions is 60 knots and the normal cruise speed is 40 knots.

The crew training and craft instrumentation allows the craft to operate in zero visibility and in all but the most extreme weather conditions. The craft is equipped with the full range of marine and aircraft radio and direction finding equipment, radar, Loran-C, electronic chart plotting and search pattern displays.

Crew medical training and equipment is extensive and in-the-water rescue swimmers are part of the crew. Hovercraft operational emphasis is on high speed rapid response. Hovercraft search and rescue equipment includes two 65 million candlepower searchlights, fire-



fighting equipment, towing and limited vessel salvage gear.

Quite apart from standard marine aircraft emergency response, the hovercraft is frequently tasked to perform medical evacuations from remote or isolated locations. The hovercraft also assists other government departments, such as the Department of Fisheries, police and environmental assessment agencies.

The Canadian Coast Guard operates one other air cushion vehicle on the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. The craft is considerably larger than the west coast craft and is primarily assigned to aids to navigation and icebreaking duties.

For further information, contact:

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Canadian Coast Guard Search and Rescue Vessels

NAME	TYPE	LENGTH	BASE
George E. Darby	600 Class Cutter	56 m	Victoria
Racer	R Class Cutter	29 m	Vancouver
Ready	R Class Cutter	29 m	Victoria
Point Henry	400 Class Cutter	21 m	Prince Rupert
Point Race	400 Class Cutter	21 m	Campbell River
CG Bull Harbour	Lifeboat	13.4 m	Bull Harbour
CG Tofino	Lifeboat	13.4 m	Tofino
CG Bamfield	Lifeboat	13.4 m	Bamfield
Osprey	Rescue Boat	12.4 m	Kitsilano
Mallard	Rescue Boat	12.4 m	Powell River
Skua	Rescue Boat	12.4 m	Ganges
Teal	Launch	12 m	Kitsilano
Swift	Launch	8 m	Kitsilano
CG 039	SRN6 Hovercraft	14.7 m	Vancouver
CG 045	SRN6 Hovercraft	14.7 m	Vancouver/Parksville
CG 086	SRN6 Hovercraft	14.7 m	Vancouver



Canadian
Coast Guard

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